

Holly Swamp, Cranberry Pond and Gardnerville

By TONY KELSO

As your car hurls south on Route 3 between exits 11 and 10, have you ever wondered the name of that beautiful swamp with all the dead trees that is just west of the highway where East Street crosses?



On the official geodetic survey maps of the area there is no name, but the cranberry bogs, which are now owned by the town, are called the Loring bogs. As early as 1638 the first Duxbury residents were calling the area the Holly Swamp because it was an area full of trees now known as American Holly. They also knew that it was

one of the sources of the South River, whose course, like a tangled ball of string, wound its way north from this area rich in water sources through Duxbury and Marshfield.

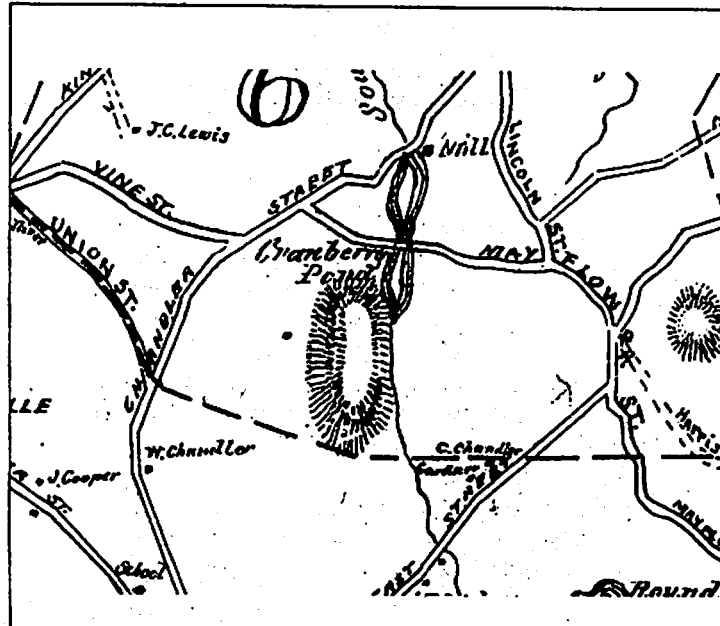
By the 1830s and through the early 1900s, the pond was called Cranberry Pond. It was dammed in the early 1800s and on the end near present day Chandler Street stood Cranberry Factory, which produced yarn and wool. One Duxbury historian in the 1920s wrote that a few old time Duxbury residents remembered going to this factory for wool that was woven into such coarse cloth that their "backs knew no scratching."

Eventually the Chandler Street end of the pond became known as Cranberry Factory Pond. By the 1850s the wool factory had become a sawmill and the pond sported an icehouse to store the ice cut from the pond. The factory and its house burned in 1900.

Cranberry Pond must have been an area of Duxbury where cranberries originally were found growing naturally in the sandy soil, since the name Cranberry Pond was well established by the 1830s. The first commercial cranberry bog in Duxbury was created in 1845 and is the bog on the corner of Temple and Church Streets.

The small valley around Cranberry Pond towards East Street has a layer of clay and was the site of several brickyards run by the Gardner family. These old yards are commemorated by the small road off of East Street called Brick Hill Lane. This little valley had half a dozen houses all owned by various Gardner families and was once an isolated area of Duxbury. It was not until 1874 that East Street was laid out from Chandlerville through what was then known as Gardner village. One old timer then wryly observed, "There were more ways of getting to this place than there was to heaven." The Gardner families also had a large slaughterhouse and in 1900 their wagons delivering meat were known all over town. The Gardner houses and slaughterhouse are all gone now and the name only exists in the subdivision road called Gardner Road.

Cranberry Pond, the Holly Swamp and Gardnerville are all names in Duxbury that are fast receding into the mist. Perhaps this is fitting, because as early morning drivers heading south on Route 3 will attest to, some mornings Cranberry Pond swamp has a haunted feeling to it as the fog and mist seem to hang like rags of clothing in the stumps and dead trees of the swamp, recalling the specters of the long gone holly trees, wild cranberries and Gardner families that once thrived in this part of Duxbury.



Cranberry Pond, once called Holly Swamp, still resembles a swamp to some with its dead tree trunks.